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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1347
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SUBJECT: TAJIK PRISON FACILITIES IN POOR CONDITION

REF: DUSHANBE 058

¶1. (U) PolOff visited a youth detention center and Tajikistan's central penitentiary medical facility January 31. Both facilities are in poor condition and lack adequate medical supplies and equipment. Deputy Minister of Justice, Izzatullo Sharipov, granted EmbOffs access in hopes the United States would provide medical supplies to the penitentiary system (REFTEL). The Ministry told EmbOffs it would consider allowing other international organizations to accompany officers on future visits.

¶2. (U) This visit is considered a significant breakthrough, since many international organizations still do not have regular monitoring privileges and access to prisons. Ministry of Justice officials told Embassy sources the Ministry denied the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access after several months of prison visits because the ICRC failed to produce assistance to the penitentiary system and had only complaints for the Ministry. The Ministry complained that the ICRC did not cooperate and communicate fully with the Ministry, and wanted to visit the prisons only on ICRC terms and schedule.

¶3. (U) The penitentiary medical center is the only facility in Tajikistan where prisoners can receive treatment. The center, set up on December 9, 2005, is currently under renovation and has 29 doctors for 200 patients. Approximately 25 patients are crammed bed-to-bed in each room. There are two small operating rooms with what appeared to be 1950's equipment. The operating room PolOff viewed was unclean and unhygienic. It had one operating table, rusty pans, and one set of medical tools and no signs of disinfectants. Tuberculosis is the most common illness among prisoners. Officials noted they have enough TB medication, donated by Moldova.

¶4. (U) PolOff spoke to patients in the presence of several

officers and guards. Patients remarked that the doctors treat them well and respond to their requests and complaints. It is likely their answers would have been more critical if officials had not been present.

¶5. (U) The youth detention center housed 96 boys ages 14-18. The boys live 25 to a room and attend school on the compound for four hours a day. They also work on the facilities, shoveling snow, cleaning rooms, and cooking in the cafeteria. A small on-site factory is being built where the boys will work manufacturing plastic goods for a small salary. The head of the detention center pointed out that the center observes the law and does not force the youths to do hard labor. Relatives are allowed to visit the boys up to three times a week and are even sometimes permitted to remain overnight with the boys. The youth detention center medical facility consists of one room with some rubbing alcohol, a bed, and a set of examination tools for all to share.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: To say the penitentiary system's medical facilities are sub-standard would be a gross understatement; it is clear why even the notoriously hard-handed Sharipov would request assistance. During the visit, all officials were cooperative and seemed to genuinely want to improve their facilities. They specifically requested medical equipment and renovation help, but never direct financial assistance. Post is working with Project Hope and the Ministry of Health to possibly channel some medical supplies to the penitentiary system in June. Post continues efforts to establish a good relationship with the notorious disciplinarian Sharipov and would like to see sustained access to prison facilities before committing to U.S. assistance. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND